

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A Monthly Newsletter by Centre for Governance Studies



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The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of CGS.

A Fragile Peace and a Shifting Power Map in the South Caucasus

Roman Uddin



Photo: Lilit Mkhitryan

After more than three decades of intermittent violence and frozen diplomacy, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict has entered a new and uncertain phase. On 8 August 2025, the two countries initialed the Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations in Washington D.C., under the mediation of the United States. For the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both governments formally acknowledged each other's territorial integrity and pledged to end hostilities. While the agreement offers a fragile hope of stability, it also represents a major geopolitical realignment that places the United States at the center of Caucasian diplomacy, while effectively sidelining Russia, the region's traditional power broker.

The roots of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict run deep into the Soviet period. In 1923, Moscow established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijan SSR, even though its population was overwhelmingly Armenian. This decision, engineered by Joseph Stalin as a balance between Turkish and Persian interests, institutionalized a structural grievance that persisted for generations. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the local Armenian authorities declared independence, which Azerbaijan rejected. The first Karabakh war (1991–1994) left some thirty thousand people dead and more than a million displaced, most of them Azerbaijanis. Armenia and its allied forces occupied not only Nagorno-Karabakh but also seven surrounding Azerbaijani districts. A Russian-brokered ceasefire froze the front lines but produced no political settlement, and the OSCE Minsk Group failed to deliver a compromise during the following decades.

The status quo was shattered in 2020, when Azerbaijan, backed by Turkish drones and intelligence, launched a rapid campaign that regained most of the lost territories. A Russian-mediated ceasefire halted the fighting after forty-four days, deploying two thousand Russian peacekeepers along

the Lachin corridor to protect the remaining Armenian population. Yet the arrangement was unstable. By September 2023, Azerbaijan carried out a one-day “anti-terror” operation, reasserting full control over Nagorno-Karabakh and prompting more than one hundred thousand Armenians to flee to Armenia. The self-proclaimed “Republic of Artsakh” dissolved itself on 1 January 2024. Armenia, disillusioned by Moscow’s passivity during the crisis, turned increasingly toward the United States and the European Union for diplomatic and security guarantees. This geopolitical pivot set the stage for Washington’s entry as chief mediator in 2025.

The August 2025 deal builds on that shift and embodies the end of the Russian-centric framework. Its text emphasizes mutual recognition of sovereignty, renunciation of force, and the creation of diplomatic relations. Crucially, it introduces a new connectivity project: a transit corridor through Armenia’s southern Syunik (Zangezur) region linking mainland Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan exclave. The corridor remains Armenian sovereign territory, but its construction and administration for ninety-nine years are assigned to a U.S.-backed consortium responsible for developing rail, road, and digital infrastructure. This arrangement gives Washington an unprecedented operational and economic presence in the South Caucasus. At the same time, Armenia and Azerbaijan jointly requested the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, thereby removing the only institution where Russia had maintained formal mediation authority since the 1990s.

By the end of August 2025, optimism remained cautious. The treaty was initialed but not yet ratified by either parliament. Both sides still disputed technical details of border delimitation, the legal status of the corridor, and constitutional amendments demanded by Baku to erase residual Armenian territorial claims. Although small cross-border trade offices have opened and exploratory teams have begun surveying possible transit routes, implementation of core provisions had yet to begin. Sporadic skirmishes persisted in several frontier areas, reminding observers that paper commitments have not yet translated into mutual trust. Nevertheless, the publication of the full text on 11 August 2025 represented a degree of transparency unprecedented in the region’s diplomacy.

Historically, the conflict reflected great-power rivalries as much as local nationalism. Under Soviet rule, Moscow contained tensions by suppressing nationalist movements, and after independence, it preserved leverage by stationing troops and supplying arms to both sides. That system has now unraveled. The new agreement removes Russian peacekeepers and replaces the Minsk Group’s tripartite mediation with direct U.S. facilitation, marking the first clear erosion of Russian authority in the South Caucasus since 1991. Armenia has turned toward closer cooperation with the European Union, the United States, and France, while Azerbaijan accepts limited Western oversight in exchange for formal recognition of its territorial gains.

Yet the accord leaves critical humanitarian and political issues unresolved. It confirms Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan without autonomy or cultural guarantees for its former Armenian residents. The clause on voluntary and safe return remains symbolic, and most displaced Armenians see no realistic path back. Within Armenia, the deal has sparked protests and accusations of capitulation, as critics argue that Yerevan traded tangible assets for an uncertain peace.

Internationally, the agreement signals a profound geopolitical shift. The U.S.-supervised corridor project gives Washington a direct economic and diplomatic foothold in regional infrastructure, aligning with broader efforts to diversify Eurasian connectivity away from Russian and Iranian control. Russia, absorbed in its war in Ukraine, has lost both military leverage and diplomatic initiative. Iran views the new alignment warily, while Turkey welcomes it as strengthening its links with Turkic partners. Peace remains fragile, but a new balance of power is clearly emerging.

US- Russia Alaska Summit: Frozen Dialogue, Empty Outcome

Depanjali Roy



It's been more than three years since the outbreak of the Russia – Ukraine war, a conflict that has resulted in severe humanitarian, political, and economic consequences for both nations and the broader international community. The war started in 2022 following escalating tensions over Ukraine's pursuit of closer ties with NATO and the European Union, marked a significant deterioration in the long-strained relationship between Moscow and Kyiv. The roots of this tension can be traced back to 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, an event that fundamentally altered the security landscape of Eastern Europe and left the border regions in a state of persistent instability. Historically, Russia and Ukraine have shared deep cultural and linguistic connections, yet their political trajectories have increasingly diverged in the post-Soviet era, leading to ongoing conflict and mistrust.

After the war started in 2022, many countries tried to be the mediator to stop the war, although such efforts proved unsuccessful in the face of Russia's firm diplomatic stance. On August 15, 2025 US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin had a meet up in Alaska trying to come up with a ceasefire on the Russia-Ukraine war. Although the goal of the meeting has been missed, that's what experts said. Although the relationship between the US and Russia was always cold, the

Trump administration appeared to pursue a different approach toward Moscow compared to its policy toward China. The goal of the summit was clearly defined, however no clarification was provided by the two countries in the press briefing. Every statement was vague and "the meeting was a success" does not convey any elucidation on the Russia - Ukraine ceasefire.

If we go back, some months ago, Trump was taking interest in the Russo-Ukraine war to stop. Trump also mentioned this particular issue in his 2024 election campaign and promised to end the war on the first day of his office. After that, he warned Russia of potential tariff increasing and imposition of additional sanctions. Phone calls between the leaders took place and warning continued from Trump's side. Putin did not attend the direct negotiation with Volodymyr Zelenskyy on May 15, 2025 in Istanbul, which was viewed by observers as a sign of limited Russian interest in concluding the war or addressing sanctions. By the course of time Trump gave Putin more and more ultimatums to end the war. On July 14, 2025 he announced the US will impose a 100 percent tariff on Russia if they do not end the war within 50 days. On July 28, 2025 the deadline was cut short and Russia was given 10-12 days to come to a conclusion. Before the deadline, Trump announced the meeting on August 15, 2025, which raised the eyebrows of the analyst to speculate their next move.

On August 15, 2025, both Putin and Trump did not face any question by the journalist after the meeting, but only gave their statements. In the press conference Putin stated that, "root causes" of the war needs to be addressed to end the war, and they want recognition of Russian sovereignty over the Ukrainian regions of Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as well as Ukraine agreeing to demilitarization, neutrality, no foreign military involvement and new elections, which states that no decisions were taken regarding the sanctions. After that Trump said "We did not get there (sanctions)". This summit can also be a way for Trump to strengthen bonds with Russia. After 2022 many countries from Europe and others-imposed sanctions on Russia and cut ties. However, the summit on August 15, gave Putin the spotlight he wanted, also gave him the upper hand in the decision-making position to stop the war. Therefore, John Bolton, a former Trump national security advisor, told The Atlantic that he thought "Trump did not lose, but Putin clearly won. Putin got everything he could have wished for, but he's not home free yet", explains a lot.

As not getting any information from the presidents after the summit, suspicions started about the actual purpose of the meeting. Could the focus have been China In the ongoing rivalry between the established superpower, the United States, and the emerging one, China, Russia's position may not be decisive but still holds considerable strategic importance. By hosting Putin in Alaska, Trump signaled to Beijing that Washington has the capacity to engage Moscow. This leaves China wondering whether Trump and Putin discussed China and if those talks came at Beijing's expense. The Alaska meeting may represent the first significant step in reshaping the US-China-Russia dynamic, potentially encouraging Moscow to distance itself somewhat from Beijing and edge closer to Washington. This would not necessarily turn Russia and China into adversaries, nor make Russia and the United States allies. Rather, it could prompt Moscow to assume a more balanced stance between Beijing and Washington. Whatever the agenda is, none of that was clear to the journalist or the global citizens. So, it can be said that, ceasefire of the Russia- Ukraine war was not a goal but a decoy of meeting the presidents and making their bond stronger for future benefits.

Indonesia's protest wave: Economic Frustration Turns Political

Debi Karmakar



Photo: Timur Matahari / AFP

The current wave of protests began on 25 August 2025 when students and citizens rallied outside Indonesia's parliament in Jakarta after revelations that lawmakers receive a Rupiah 50 million monthly housing allowance, which is roughly ten times more than Jakarta's minimum wage. The General Public's anger over these benefits collided with a squeeze on living standards and austerity cuts to education, health, and public works. These turned a pocketbook issue into a broader indictment of elite privilege and governance.

Amid a movement, fueled by economic frustration and anger at political decisions. The Death of a food delivery driver, Affan Kurniawan, who was fatally run over by a police vehicle, escalated tensions in Jakarta. The death galvanized protests far beyond the capital and raised demands for police accountability. Authorities said officers tied to the incident are under investigation.

Student-led demonstrations, co-joined by gig workers and civil society groups, spread across Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and beyond. While many marches remained peaceful, some turned violent. Regional government buildings and police posts were torched, and the homes of several politicians, including the finance minister, were looted. Reported casualties put the death toll at least 7–10, with hundreds injured and thousands detained. People are calling for independent investigations into the use of force.

President Prabowo Subianto, in his young presidency, has been facing the most serious crisis. He tried a dual track: concessions and crackdown. On the one hand, he moved to curb lawmakers' amenities (including the housing allowance and overseas trips) and promised a transparent

President Prabowo Subianto executed a major cabinet reshuffle, firing five ministers, including globally respected Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati and the security chief. Sri Mulyani is known as the Fiscal Hawk due to his strict economic policy on government spending. Her removal from the cabinet injected fear among investors as the government might now start spending more on social programs and security. As a visible result, amid the political unrest, the rupiah fell and the stock market dropped. Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa was named the new finance minister. He pledged stability and growth.

At its core, the unrest reflects a disparity between people's everyday sacrifices and elite insulation. Protesters complained about inflation pressures, tight household budgets, and the sense that political and military elites are shielded from the economic halter. Student groups and workers frame their demands around economic fairness, civilian control of security forces, and accountability for abuses. This is no longer just about a housing allowance; it's about fairness, accountability, and whether public sacrifice is shared by those in power.

The forthcoming scenario of the protests will hinge between Security posture vs. dialogue. Between crowd control and credible dialogue, Prabowo will shape whether tensions will ease or harden. The United Nations and Human Rights Watch have urged restraint and accountability. They warned against treating protesters as "traitors" or "terrorists." Indonesian police have said multiple officers linked to the fatal vehicle incident are facing disciplinary and criminal review. Investors are closely watching the market conditions and whether the new Finance team will be able to keep a balance between deficit and public spending.